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Griz basketball season is best in 24 years at UM

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GRIZ BASKETBALL SEASON IS BEST
IN 24 YEARS AT UM

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MISSOULA---

Montana's Grizzlies closed the 1973-74 basketball season with a disappointing 60-57 loss to Idaho State in the Big Sky Conference championship playoff game, but their 19-8 final record was the school's best in 24 years and the .704 winning percentage the school's second best in 67 seasons of roundball.

Only the 27-4 record compiled by the 1949-50 team surpassed the success of the latest Grizzly squad.

"Naturally, we were disappointed to miss out on the NCAA playoff berth, but it was a successful season," third-year Coach Jud Heathcote said. "We got off to a slow start, but knew we had the potential to have a good ballclub and were pleased that we could put together a long win streak and be title contenders."

After a 6-7 start, the Tips tied the school record of 13 straight wins, moved into a first-place tie with Idaho State in the conference standings and forced a playoff game for the championship.

With only one senior starting Heathcote is predicting another winning season next year. "We have a strong nucleus with four starters and four highly capable reserves returning," Heathcote said. Our frontline will be strong and although we lose two of our first three guards we'll have three lettermen back at guard."

The Grizzlies lose starting guard Robin Selvig, number three guard Kevin Rocheleau and backup center Scott Hollenbeck to graduation.

Center Ken McKenzie, a unanimous all-conference selection, forwards Eric Hays and Tim Stambaugh and guard Ben DeMers are returning starters. Hays was named to the second unit of the Big Sky's all star squad. In addition, Larry Smedley, a part-time starter at forward, is expected to rebound from an injury troubled season.

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GRIZ HAVE FINE SEASON--2

Although he returns a large number of veterans, Heathcote is expecting an even tougher battle in the Big Sky next year. "Every club in the league returns a better nucleus than they ever have," he said. "The Big Sky will have its best year next year."

Montana set a new school record for field goal accuracy during the season. The Tips wound up with a 48.4 per cent success figure to eclipse the 45.5 per cent figure set the previous season.

McKenzie set a school record for most field goals in a game when he tossed in 16 of 22 attempts against Southern Colorado. His 39 points in that game was the most ever scored by a UM player in Adams Fieldhouse.

McKenzie, who finished as the Big Sky's top scorer and rebounder, moved into 11th place on the UM career scoring list. His 505 points in the 1973-74 campaign ranks fourth on the single season scoring list.

The 13 game win streak matched the record set by the 1941-42 club. Ironically, the 1941-42 team was only 14-10 for the season and also had a seven game losing skein.

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